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USSR - MIDDLE EAST: Politburo member Andrey Kirilenko arrives in Beirut today on the second stop of a trip he apparently did not want to take. Last week he attended the opening of a new phase of the Soviet-sponsored Euphrates Dam project in Syria.

High-level Soviet leaders have been reluctant to travel to the Middle East because of the underlying strains in Moscow's relations with the Arab world and because they are disinclined publicly to commit their personal prestige given the pitfalls associated with Soviet-Arab relations. The Soviets had intended to send a less important figure to Damascus, but the Syrians--who had expected Premier Kosygin--insisted on someone of Politburo status. In Beirut, Kirilenko probably will be asked to mediate Syrian-Lebanese differences over the checks Beirut has placed on fedayeen activities. This is a delicate task that will be difficult to perform without offending one of the parties, but Kirilenko can be expected to advise both sides to be cautious.

The Egyptians have been pressing for a high-level Soviet visit for over a year and had hoped that someone of Kirilenko's status would visit Cairo in July to brief President Sadat on the US-Soviet summit. A Soviet Foreign Ministry official recently told a US diplomat, however, that there are no plans for a Soviet leader to visit Cairo this summer. Instead, an Egyptian delegation, led by President Sadat's adviser for national security Hafiz Ismail will arrive in Moscow on 12 July for consultations on Brezhnev's recent talks with Western leaders. The Soviets also want to coordinate strategy on the forthcoming resumption of the UN Security Council debate. Moscow reportedly is annoyed over the lack of consultation at the previous session, and has privately complained to the US that it had no forewarning of Egypt's injection of the 1947 Palestine border issue into the June debate. [redacted]

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USSR-AUSTRIA: Soviet Premier Kosygin's four-day official visit to Austria last week was dominated by detente themes and left both sides generally satisfied.

Kosygin conferred with Chancellor Kreisky, visited the state-owned steel plant at Linz, and gave interviews to the media. He followed a similar schedule while in Sweden in early April. These sojourns appear to be part of an orchestrated Soviet effort to improve bilateral relations with the neutral states. The frequency of Kosygin's public references to the gathering of foreign ministers in Helsinki to discuss European security indicates Moscow's special goals in that area.

The language in the communique on the delicate subject of Austrian neutrality was especially pleasing to Vienna, since the Soviets for the first time went along with a reference to "constitutionally anchored" Austrian neutrality. The Austrians regard this as Soviet acceptance of Vienna's right to define its ideological orientation. The Soviets also indicated they would pose no further objections to Vienna's contacts with the EC. Kosygin did, however, state at his press interview that Moscow would not consider any revision of the state treaty that would permit a defensive missile system on Austrian soil.

Economic relations were reviewed at some length. The ten-year industrial cooperation agreement initialed in February was signed, but Austrian officials say that it is no more than an informal undertaking, with no specific projects scheduled for implementation in the near future. The Soviets agreed to a five-percent increase in natural gas deliveries to Austria. The Austrians had hoped for at least a doubling of the deliveries in spite of Soviet Foreign Trade Minister Patolichev's statement last January that Austria could not expect such a boost at this time. [redacted]

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USSR: The Soviet grain crop could reach a record high this year, assuming good weather through the harvest period. Even so, the Soviets will need to import as much as 15 million tons of grain to cover domestic and export requirements. So far this year, the Soviets have already contracted for about 9 million tons of grain, almost 7 million tons from the US.

A record sowing of spring grains more than offset last fall's shortfall in the sowing of winter grains. The total grain area is at its highest level since 1965. The weather thus far has been favorable for the development of both winter and spring grains. The spring grains are now in a critical stage, requiring adequate rainfall and cool temperatures. If the weather continues to be favorable, the net grain harvest could amount to 157 million metric tons compared with 150 million in 1970, the previous high.

Soviet grain purchasing currently appears to be in a lull, probably a result of high world grain prices and prospects for a good harvest this year.

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